

RIDING THE WIND WITH MOZART'S 'JUPITER' SYMPHONY: THE KANTIAN AND DAOIST SUBLIMES IN CHINESE MUSICAL MODERNITY

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When he [Huang Zi] taught us [the second movement of] Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony, he would say the music manifests a lofty whole (*gaohun*), like being in the poetic occasion (*jingjie*) of Su Shi's *ci* poem 'To the Tune, "Water Melody"' [1076]: 'I would like to ride the wind, make my home there [the bright moon] / only I fear in porphyry towers, under jade eaves / in those high places the cold wind would be more than I could bear.'¹

My nation's music is too simple and plain,
Shocking a Western friend on his first hearing.
I love the sophisticated *faqu* [symphony] of Beethoven,
Engaging profound aspirations with exquisite grandeur.²

ELICITING SUBLIME FEELINGS about the nation was a crucial aesthetic goal of Chinese musical modernity. The school song 'Yellow River' ('Huanghe', 1905), composed by Shen Xingong (1870–1947) and set in a solemn march rhythm to a patriotic text, impressed the leading music reformer and composer Huang Zi (1904–38) with its 'vehement manliness and unselfish vigour' (*xiongchen kangkai*).³ Such aesthetic expression moved Huang deeply during early childhood, as the composer reminisced on his return to China after graduating from the Department of Music at Yale University. The

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¹ Liao Fushu, 'Remembering Mr. Huang Zi' ('Yi Huang Zi xiansheng'), in Liao Chongxiang (ed.), *Talking about the Past from the Music Garden: Collected Essays of Liao Fushu* (*Yueyuan tanwang: Liao Fushu wenji*) (Beijing, 1996), 82–6 at 85. Originally published in 1983. The translation is mine except for Su Shi's verses, which is by Burton Watson. See Burton Watson, *Su Tung-P'o: Selections from a Sung Dynasty Poet* (New York, 1965), 67. The title of the poem is by Ronald C. Egan as given in his *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1994), 345.

² Cai Yuanpei. A quatrain reproduced from Liao Fushu, 'Cai Yuanpei Thought about Music when Things Happened' ('Cai Yuanpei yushi xiangdao yinyue'), in Liao (ed.), *Talking about the Past*, 222–7 at 226. Originally published in 1989. 'Faqu' is a multi-sectional and grandly structured musical genre developed in the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD). Here it serves as a metaphor for the symphonic music of Beethoven.

³ Unless otherwise noted, the family name precedes the given name where Chinese names are followed by dates. Where dates are not provided, the given name is cited first. In citations, however, the family name always precedes the given name for authors of Chinese-language publications.

vigorous aesthetic, Huang further remarked, was ‘rarely found in [existing] music composed by Chinese people’.⁴ Indeed, both the musical style of ‘Yellow River’ and the aesthetic concept that Huang attributed to it were modern expressions. The martial style of the song was modelled after Western hymnody or military music, adoption of which constituted part of the new Chinese song repertoire taught to modern primary school children.⁵ The celebrated manly vigour of the song, in which the grandeur of the nation’s landscape was exalted to provoke patriotic aspiration, was conceptualized in terms that corresponded with new aesthetic notions related to the Kantian sublime.

As modern thinkers introduced Western philosophy in Chinese translation at the turn of the twentieth century, the Kantian notions of the beautiful and the sublime became important modern Chinese aesthetic concepts.⁶ The circulation of the idea of the sublime in its various translated forms, which combined classical words to create modern meanings (e.g. *zhuangmei*, *hongzhuang*, *zhida*, *zhigang*, *xiongwei*, *chonggao*), opened up new aesthetic possibilities of expression and experience. Although music reformers did not discuss the sublime as a distinct topic, the term ‘sublime’ in its English form was used in a musical essay written by Huang to characterize the great works of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mozart. His translated term *zhuangyan xiongwei*, literally ‘with monumental grandeur and virile greatness’,⁷ referred to contemporaneous thinkers’ translated notions of the sublime, while expanding their lexicons. Indeed, Huang’s remarks call for a *musical* inquiry into the sublime in Chinese modernity, one that has yet to be explored in existing scholarship.

The difficulty of conducting such an investigation stems from the lack of modern music criticism that substantially engaged with aesthetic issues when commenting on specific musical works.⁸ It is unlikely that Chinese composers, such as Huang, consciously and specifically drew from Immanuel Kant and other Western philosophers when making aesthetic remarks or when composing music. However, composers’ direct engagement with philosophy need not be the only foundation for a productive inquiry into aesthetic expressions in music. The study of the musical sublime in musical scholarship of the past two decades, for example, has shown how philosophical and aesthetic interpretations of the sublime may be productively applied to musical phenomena even without direct endorsement from the composers’ own reflections. Among numerous studies,⁹ Elaine

⁴ Huang Zi, ‘Preface to *Xingong’s Songbook*’ (*Xingong chang ge ji xu*), in *Collected Works of Huang Zi: Essays* (*Huang Zi yizuo ji: wenlun fenge*), ed. Dai Penghai (Anhui, China, 1997), 71. Originally published in 1937.

⁵ The new song repertoire is known as ‘school songs’ (*xuetang yuege*), a genre adopted from Meiji Japan (known as *shoka* in Japanese). The diverse origins of the repertoire, including sources from Europe, America, and Japan besides original Chinese compositions, are shown with details in Qian Renkang, *A Source Study of School Songs* (*Xuetang yuege kaoyuan*) (Shanghai, 2001).

⁶ Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif., 1997), 1–54.

⁷ Huang Zi, ‘Appreciating Music’ (*‘Yinyue xinshang’*), in *Collected Works of Huang Zi: Essays*, 96. Originally published in Huang Zi et al., *Teaching Guides for Reviving Junior High School Music Education* (*Fuxing chujī zhongxue yinyue jiaoke shu*) (Shanghai, 1933).

⁸ There were numerous published discussions about music during the interwar period. However, most were introductory readings without significant philosophical reflections. Among them, Liao Shangguo (1893–1959), a reformer-critic with the pseudonyms Qing Zhu, Li Qing, or Li Qingzhu, was most notable with his interest in Western philosophy. In *A General Discussion of Music*, Liao cited ideas from over a hundred eminent intellectual, artistic, and musical figures in Western history, from Martin Luther to Schopenhauer. However, Liao’s commentaries on musical works did not significantly engage aesthetic perspectives. Kant is mentioned on one occasion as one of those who ‘belittles music’. Liao Shangguo [Qing Zhu], *A General Discussion of Music* (*Yinyue tonglun*) (Shanghai, 1933), 9.

⁹ Other works written by musicologists that are cited in this article, which by no means represent all the significant works in the field, include those written by Wye J. Allanbrook, Mark Evan Bonds, Nicholas Mathew, and James Webster. Wye J. Allanbrook, ‘Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?’, *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 7 (2010), 263–79; Mark

Sisman's Kantian interpretation of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551, the 'Jupiter' (1788), provides a case that is particularly useful for this study.¹⁰ Mozart himself is not known to have studied Kant, not to mention the fact that the symphony was composed before Kant published his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), the crucial source for Kant's ideas on the sublime. Nonetheless, historical music criticism offers clues for creative interpretations that are both philosophically informed and historically grounded. In China, the lack of music criticism in the still-emerging modern musical scene compels a different approach. What may be studied are the musical thoughts and opinions of composers, teachers, and reformers, which might be expressed by a single person, such as Huang. Such individual, historically situated insights into music's aesthetic power and functions, which negotiated between Western and Chinese cultures, present provocative materials for our aesthetic investigation and philosophical interpretation.

According to his students' recollections, Huang remarked on the impression that Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony made upon him. He did not refer to grandeur in translated Kantian notions, but celebrated a different mode of the sublime, one that invokes associations with Daoist immortals and Chinese classical poetics. Most interestingly, his underlying idea of the sublime contrasts with the Kantian mode that Sisman and her sympathetic readers celebrate in the same symphony, though different movements are in focus. Such a contrast in listening indicates that beyond the mode of the sublime referring to translated Kantian notions, there existed at least one other mode with a distinctive aesthetic structure, one that draws from native expressive symbols related to Daoism and may be called the Daoist sublime.

This article examines the musical sublime as a crucial field of aesthetic imagination and experience in Chinese musical modernity, focusing on the early twentieth century, when new musical thinking and institutions were established.¹¹ It argues that both the Kantian sublime and Daoist sublime constituted the modern field, and seeks to identify their different structural and expressive properties, with an interpretative analysis of a musical piece towards the end. While Kant's aesthetics has been the subject of an evolving discourse in the West, and Kant was not the only Western philosopher studied in early twentieth-century China, the Kantian reference here carries epistemological-structural significance as well as serving as an iconic representation of the modern West. Although the Kantian sublime was more prominent than the Daoist sublime in modern discourse, the strong sense of cultural continuity with which the Daoist sublime engaged relied on expressive features that were no less modern. My examination focuses on reformers who were promoters of Western art music, but analyses of their thoughts and musical expressions trace meanings to pre-modern Chinese practices.

The sublime as an idea denoting an expanding or elevating aesthetic experience of the self has been known in Chinese expressive culture since antiquity, being conveyed

Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, 2006); Nicholas Mathew, 'Beethoven's Political Music, the Handelian Sublime, and the Aesthetics of Prostration', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 33 (2009), 110–50; James Webster, 'The Creation, Haydn's Late Vocal Music, and the Musical Sublime', in Elaine Rochelle Sisman (ed.), *Haydn and his World* (Princeton, 1997), 57–102. Scott Burnham's remarks on transcendence in discussing the second movement of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony are also useful to this article: Scott Burnham, *Mozart's Grace* (Princeton, 2013), 109–14.

¹⁰ Elaine R. Sisman, *Mozart: The 'Jupiter' Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551* (New York, 1993).

¹¹ For an analytical discussion of how the Chinese negotiated between the modern West and pre-modern China in creating new musical thinking and institutions, see Joys Hoi Yan Cheung, 'Chinese Music and Translated Modernity in Shanghai, 1918–1937' (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2008).

through a variety of classical terms that were specific to particular expressive contexts as well as historical moments. However, the music that was the occasion for experiencing the pre-modern sublime was rejected by many reformers of the early twentieth century, as they responded to national crises triggered by colonialism and imperialism by adopting Western science and classical music,¹² and regarded native musical sounds as too weak. Amid expanding imperial invasions and internal political turmoil, the modern aesthetic of the sublime gained profound appeal with its uplifting power, especially for nation builders and culture reformers. Given the nation's destructive colonial experiences since the Opium War (1839–42), modernity was not merely a stage of national development underlining the use of scientific technology and industrial capital, but was key to national survival. With Western learning as the main element of the security and evolution project, the nation was constantly in search of ways to break from the past, responding to calls for new movements and revolutions. The virile strength featured in the Kantian sublime suited the aspirations to action of the time. But alongside the dominating mode of the Kantian sublime, Daoist ideals of transcendence as imagined in classical arts continued to have cultural meanings. To find out how the Daoist sublime existed as part of Chinese modernity, we need to consider it alongside the Kantian sublime, which itself played a crucial role in the initial emergence of the modern field of Chinese aesthetics.

Before reconstructing modern Chinese musical aesthetics and presenting the two modes of musical sublime, it is necessary first to contextualize the issues surrounding Kant and the sublime in relation to Chinese modernity and Chinese musical practices. The next section outlines the significance of Kant in modern China and Chinese scholarship, reviews the trajectory of the Kantian sublime in music, and gives an overview of the Chinese notions of the sublime in both pre-modern and modern musical contexts.

KANT, CHINA, AND THE MUSICAL SUBLIME

Kant has generated ongoing critical responses from thinkers in the West and beyond. For modern China as well as for many non-Western societies, he has been an intellectual icon of the modern West. In *What is Enlightenment: Can China Answer Kant's Question?*, for example, Wei Zhang presents a line of enlightenment criticism stretching in an uninterrupted fashion from Kant to Foucault and Habermas. The book revisits Kant's influential answer to the question 'What is enlightenment?'—that is, 'man's emergence from self-inflicted immaturity', which was adapted by scholars of modern China to characterize the early twentieth-century Chinese enlightenment—as 'China's emergence from its feudal past'.¹³ The latter characterization is seen not to stand because it sets apart the

¹² Scholarship on colonialism or semi-colonialism in modern China has exploded across disciplines in the past few decades. Kuan-Hsing Chen's recent postcolonial critique regards China's case as more related to Western imperialism than colonialism, and argues that the decolonialization movement has not yet fully and culturally dealt with the problem of deimperialization. See Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* (Durham, NC, 2010), 5, 11, 173. While Chen's critique on the impact of imperialism on the Chinese psyche and the call for deimperialization are insightful, the theory of semi-colonialism helps explain the delay of deimperialization. In my view, the fragmented experience of colonialism in China allowed the Chinese to continue a strong sense of cultural and national belonging, despite their open adoption of the West. For a study of semi-colonialism in Chinese literary modernity, see Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley, 2001). Scholars have also used the theory of translation to understand Chinese modernity, e.g. Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, Calif., 1995). For a musical analysis of translation in Huang's music, see Joys H. Y. Cheung, 'Singing Ancient Piety and Modernity in "Song of Familial Bliss" (1935): Musical Translation of Huang Zi (1904–1938) in Interwar China', *Asian Music*, 41/2 (2010), 4–58.

¹³ Wei Zhang, *What is Enlightenment: Can China Answer Kant's Question?* (Albany, NY, 2010), 29. The 'burden of the feudal past' includes, among other things, an ethic of subservience to patriarchal authority. See Vera Schwarcz, *The*

social and political from the theoretical and philosophical. Instead, Zhang argues that modern Chinese enlightenment, marked by the May Fourth movement of 1919 that pressed for intellectual changes with strong socio-political involvement,¹⁴ engaged both the social and the theoretical, as well as the dialectical tensions between them.¹⁵ Kant also appealed to Chinese intellectuals as a model for thinking. For Mou Zongsan (1909–95), a neo-Confucian thinker born five years after Huang, Kant's analyses of reason and free will offer a modern philosophical structure to elucidate the problem of ethics and humanity in Confucianism. While Mou's interpretation has been criticized as distorting Confucianism,¹⁶ it demonstrates the importance of Kant in Chinese intellectual modernity.

In the field of aesthetics, Kant's conceptualization of human cognitive faculties underlines their modern philosophical significance. Although early twentieth-century Chinese interpreters of Kant's aesthetics tended not to emphasize Kantian reason in the same way as the Western tradition, they were inspired by his monumental trilogy of critiques to explore and articulate human values and experience from new perspectives. Leading thinkers of this modern field of aesthetic knowledge included Wang Guowei (1877–1927) and Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), whose readings of Kant and subsequent thinkers in the German idealist tradition yielded distinctive responses. The former stressed the 'innermost psyche and emotional depths' of people and integrated aesthetics with modern literary criticism,¹⁷ whereas the latter developed aesthetics as a reform programme of political governance and social betterment. (Cai's 'aesthetic education' programme, as will be discussed in this article, was crucial to the modern music establishment.)

While both the beautiful and the sublime in Kantian aesthetics and its legacy were known in Chinese terms, the sublime attracted more profound interest among Chinese thinkers and writers. Ban Wang's *The Sublime Figure of History* examined differing Chinese conceptions of, expressions of, and reactions to the sublime in the twentieth century, from the time of Wang (Guowei) and Cai onwards, through Maoist discourse and representation, and their counter-reactions. The sublime, despite its Western origin, has stimulated such a flourishing discourse of Chinese interpretation that, as Wang has noted, 'it is no longer feasible to say that Chinese aestheticians are dealing merely with a borrowed concept'.¹⁸

Kant was certainly not the only aesthetic philosopher to whom Chinese thinkers responded. Also, his definition of the sublime was not the only one in the evolving field of aesthetics. Rather, Kant was a substantive contributor to the tradition. Those who came after Kant, including Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and the neo-Kantian Friedrich

Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), 2. Schwarz's exclusive emphasis on the theoretical and philosophical in defining the European enlightenment is criticized by Zhang as impeding her assessment of the social and political in the enlightenment project of both modern Europe and China. Zhang, *What is Enlightenment*, 29–43.

¹⁴ The May Fourth movement started as massive student protests against unequal treaties signed after the First World War, and quickly evolved to become a nationwide social and cultural phenomenon marked by iconoclasm and new culture movements seeking, among other practices, democracy and science from the modern West.

¹⁵ Reviewing Kant's discussion of 'What is enlightenment?', Zhang rejects the earlier view proposed by Schwarz that the Chinese enlightenment was incomplete, as philosophical discourse and intellectual debates were distracted by a series of social and political events. Zhang argues instead that the enlightenment in the West was never separated from the socio-political. Zhang, *What is Enlightenment*, 29–43.

¹⁶ Stephan Schmidt, 'Mou Zongsan, Hegel, and Kant: The Quest for Confucian Modernity', *Philosophy East and West*, 61 (2011), 260–302 at 261.

¹⁷ Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 24.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 9.

Paulsen—all of whom were read by early twentieth-century Chinese thinkers—worked within Kant’s legacy. The importance of the Kantian sublime lay, among other things, in the way it connected the metaphysics of reason with nature and ethics, positing the epistemological importance of aesthetic judgement in realizing freedom and infinity, which were core enlightenment values. According to Wye J. Allanbrook, Kant put the sublime on a philosophical trajectory, providing for us human beings ‘our only contact with the noumenal, the Absolute, which lies beyond our perceptions’.¹⁹

Kant identified two modes of aesthetic experience: the beautiful and the sublime. Whereas the beautiful entails a harmony between one’s faculties of imagination and understanding, the sublime unsettles this relation. During an experience of the sublime, excess from external stimuli confuses the mind so that it arrives at a blockage in response. But as soon as the faculty of reason confronts the excess and takes the mind to a higher, supersensible level of cognition, one experiences an enhanced sense of lucidity and totalization. Before Kant presented his ideas in the *Critique of Judgement*, notions of the sublime without comparable philosophical signification had been in circulation. Since Nicolas Boileau’s translation of the Greek work *On the Sublime*, attributed to Longinus, was published in 1674, the sublime as a mode of transport had become a subject of intellectual interest. In the Longinian mode, the sublime is a lofty style in oratorical and rhetorical persuasion, lacking the Kantian focus on subjectivity.

In the second half of the eighteenth century critics paid distinct attention to the grand style of strong expressive qualities in music, noting the power of astonishing and stirring moments.²⁰ Through the rest of the century the sublime received different levels of musical attention from critics and composers. By the early nineteenth century, the Kantian sublime was theoretically extended to music,²¹ giving rise to the notion that music is an autonomous aesthetic object with meanings located in its inner structure. Such a notion of sublime and autonomous art became increasingly associated with the genre of the symphony.²² Meanwhile, as Nicholas Mathew has shown through the case of Ludwig van Beethoven, the ‘symphonic sublime’ was developed from a vibrant culture of staging choral music—especially that of Handel and Haydn—in grand and monumental productions, which had specific political origins.²³

Interpretation of the sublime has always been an evolving topic. Stylistic analysis is particularly controversial with respect to the musical sublime, especially in the interpretation of the Kantian sublime. Disagreements lie in structural distinctions between Kantian and non-Kantian modes of the sublime in music. Allanbrook, for example, has criticized ‘regressive’ Kantian interpretations of eighteenth-century music, stressing the fact that the original Longinian meaning of ‘lofty’, ‘elevated’, and ‘noble’ continued

¹⁹ Allanbrook, ‘Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?’, 264.

²⁰ Sisman, *Mozart: The ‘Jupiter’ Symphony*, ch. 2.

²¹ A notable Kantian theorist was Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770–1834). Among other things, Michaelis located the sublime in the inner structure of music. See Mathew, ‘Beethoven’s Political Music’, 112 n. 14.

²² Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 45.

²³ Mathew has eloquently shown how Beethoven’s symphonies should often be best understood as ‘orchestral transmutations of the grand Handelian chorus’, and the political context that underlay the choral music productions in Vienna illuminates ‘the continuing political potency of Beethoven’s symphonies’. Mathew, ‘Beethoven’s Political Music’, 150. Mathew’s discussion of choral music in relation to its political context in Beethoven’s Vienna in the late 18th and early 19th century makes it comparable to modern Chinese choral music in its early 20-c. political context, though the monarch was no longer a subject in the Chinese ‘aesthetics of prostration’, and the Church was not an established source of institutionalized patronage, as was the case in Europe.

as prevailing meanings of the German term *erhaben* throughout the century.²⁴ Also, challenging Sisman's interpretation of the coda of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony as realizing Kant's mathematical sublime, Allanbrook—elaborating upon Leonard Ratner's remark—hears the coda as 'not an *invocation* of the infinite, but an *evocation* of operatic closure'.²⁵

The different hearings demonstrate how the sublime continues to inspire diverse musical interpretations in the Western tradition. But interpretations that invoke Kantian notions productively draw parallels between philosophical and musical developments. Perspectives on musical manifestations of enlightenment values, such as infinity, reason, and the Absolute, are particularly useful in contexts where Kant is received cross-culturally. In the Chinese context, the analytic discourse of the Kantian sublime crucially facilitates an epistemological construction that locates aesthetics as fundamental to modern musical imaginations, experiences, and practices.

Certainly, modern Chinese thinkers did not necessarily focus on reason and its supremacy when reading Kant's voluminous *Critique of Judgement*. One may thus argue that non-Kantian notions of the sublime were more relevant. However, such an argument would ignore the intellectual context in which the sublime entered modern Chinese knowledge. Because modern philosophical significations were the foundation on which early Chinese thinkers aesthetically engaged the sublime, the moral and theoretical values that Chinese thinkers found in Kantian aesthetic philosophy had sustaining appeal. As discussed below, the binary division between the beautiful and the sublime, a fundamental divide in the Kantian epistemology of aesthetics, even structurally shaped the modern Chinese musical discourse of aesthetics.

Notions of the sublime in Chinese translation generally describe a state of unusual sensory experience that causes positive moral effects. A strong aesthetic power impresses the mind so profoundly that the mind is distilled, and one's being is elevated and transformed in the process. The motifs of grandeur were at the core of these expressions of the sublime. Common attributes of the motifs include presentations of extraordinary magnitude or impressive intensity. Musically, the two kinds of attributes can be seen as corresponding to the aforementioned properties of Western and modern Chinese musical works that Huang commended; namely, 'monumental grandeur' as featuring an expansive magnitude, and 'virile greatness' as underlining an application of intense force.

In Chinese history, similar extraordinary sensory experience and expressive qualities have been recognized since antiquity and were guided by a set of Confucian values. In the political-cosmological belief system of Confucianism, 'sublime' sounds of the most perfect musical expressions were conceptualized according to an ideal of harmony and virtue-nurturing efficacy. As described by the early 'aesthetic critic' Prince Zha of Wu (576–484 BCE, commonly known as Ji Zha), perfect sounds had finely balanced and moderated qualities through which virtues flourished across the cosmos.²⁶ According to

²⁴ Allanbrook has pointed out that as late as 1802 Heinrich Christoph Koch's *Musikalisches Lexikon* describes the style of *erhaben* as having features of an 'exalted march', echoing a 'ceremonial' notion with which J. A. P. Schulz characterized the sublime three decades earlier. Allanbrook, 'Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?', 265.

²⁵ As cited by Allanbrook, Ratner described the symphony's eponym as 'a laughing, not an angry Jupiter'. Ibid. 268 n. 31. The quotation is from Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York, 1980), 395. For another disagreement about the scope of the Kantian and non-Kantian sublime, see Wurth's criticism of James Webster, whose study of Haydn's late vocal music is said to 'mix up the Longinian rhetorical and Kantian traditions of the sublime'. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, *Musically Sublime: Indeterminacy, Infinity, Irresolvability* (New York, 2009), 13.

²⁶ Prince Zha's comment on the 'Hymns' (*song*), performed at a concert that the State of Lu presented to him during his visit, was informed by an aesthetic sense of perfection: 'Perfection is reached! Straight but unpretentious,

the ideal, harmonious sounds were superior to ‘expansive’ and ‘grand’ qualities.²⁷ To modern Chinese ears, however, ancient sonic ideals were too weak and irrelevant for the nation to confront imminent security threats and extensive crises. Those emergencies, as Wang has described, ‘thrust into prominence an aesthetic that values action, power, grandeur, and adventure’.²⁸ The sublime aesthetic with virile and uplifting sounds was thus a ‘self-empowering strategy’ that music reformers embraced both sensually and morally. Huang himself, while teaching at the National Conservatory of Music, composed a repertory of modern songs on war or patriotic themes in a virile sublime style.

Meanwhile, music reformers invoked Confucian moral ideals to champion the vigorous sublime sounds, musically interpreting the Kantian sublime with Confucian values. Confucian values persisted despite the collapse of the long musical practice of orthodox Confucianism (which was associated with imperial governance and rituals),²⁹ and despite Westernized music reformers’ rejection of musical attempts to reconstruct Confucian rituals. Indeed, reformers’ belief in the potency of music to transform society was deeply rooted in Confucian ideology, which continued to be upheld by the nationalist government, albeit selectively. At the heart of their musical vision, leading music reformers—mostly working at educational institutions sponsored by the state—relied on Confucian moral terms to legitimize the strategic value of music in nation building. They commonly rejected the new genre of popular songs as degenerate ‘yellow music’,³⁰ advocating a new orthodox view that music should be lofty (*gaoshang*). The ideal of lofty music promoted a set of aesthetics that could cultivate proper virtues among the new nation’s citizens. Such advocacy, which has been criticized as engaging a ‘fascist aesthetic’ for its association with the nationalist government’s censorship machine,³¹ shared with Kantian aesthetics in valuing the prospect of self-enhancement. Although Kant’s ultimate emphasis on reason was arguably foreign to traditional Chinese thinking, Kantian aesthetics shared with Confucianism a valuation of aesthetic potency and its potential for refinement. In reformers’ musical discourse of aesthetics, the sublime, beautiful, and lofty appeared as both underlining traditional Confucian values and manifesting orthodox properties of modern music. The lofty grandeur of the sublime, with its vigorous modern sounds and action-arousing effects, was celebrated as the best replacement for licentious tunes of modern popular culture, as well as feeble expressions of traditional Chinese music.

Beyond Confucianism, which supplied the modern musical ideal with a native moral foundation, Daoism continued to exist as a cultural force with deep historical roots. Despite their common cosmological ground, the two schools of thought had distinctive focuses and tendencies. Generally, Confucianism guided the social dimension of self, rituals, and governance, whereas Daoism, which focused more on human–nature relations, had a salient presence in the expressive culture of the literati. The role of Daoist

turning but unbending. . . . The five notes are harmonious, the eight airs are even, . . . and there is order in each position held.’ David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 90.

²⁷ The air of Qi is ‘expansive’ (‘yangyang’), while the air of Bin is ‘grandiose’ (‘dang’). Ibid. 88.

²⁸ Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 118.

²⁹ For musical Confucianism in pre-modern ritual contexts, see Joseph S. C. Lam, ‘Musical Confucianism: The Case of “Jikong yuewu”’, in Thomas A. Wilson (ed.), *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 134–74.

³⁰ Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham, NC and London, 2001).

³¹ Ibid. 49.

philosophical values in shaping traditional Chinese aesthetic theories, which were well established as early as the Six Dynasties period (222–589), is especially prominent.³² The Daoist pursuit to attain oneness with the cosmos in non-coercive, spontaneous, and ‘un-selfconscious’ ways has shaped the lyric ideal of free and easy ‘play’ (*you*) in classical art criticism.³³ But this Daoist pursuit did not fit the modern assertive, vigorous sound aesthetic. Also, the Daoist sublime, being bound to an ideal of immortality that transcends mundane concerns and ordinary body limits, could not be easily classified within the Kantian beautiful–sublime binary frame. Yet, as an aesthetic fundamental to classical arts such as poetry, landscape painting, and the *qin*—the seven-stringed fretless zither, the question remains whether the Daoist sublime simply vanished in the music reformers’ world.

While music reformers abandoned the *qin* as backward and unscientific, and used Western musical instruments as their preferred medium, it is important to note that many continued to embrace classical poetry as their source of cultural identity and artistic inspiration. Huang, again, was the most articulate. He was prolific in showing by means of quotations how classical Chinese literary poetics was aesthetically compatible with the refined poetics generated by Western classical music. When he described what he had heard in Mozart’s ‘Jupiter’ Symphony, he cited verses from a well-known classical poem. The *ci* poem—‘To the Water Melody’ written by the Song-dynasty poet Su Shi (1037–1101)—features a Daoist immortal’s legendary wind-riding ascendance to the moon.³⁴ Such an anecdote best articulates a classical aesthetic of the sublime rooted in the Daoist ideal of transcendence, one that contrasts the Kantian sublime, which—in Sisman’s interpretative analysis—is realized to the fullest in the Coda of the symphony.³⁵ However, Huang was not referring to the Coda. While elsewhere he praised the final movement for its ‘monumental grandeur and virile greatness’, it was in the serene second movement that he heard a different kind of sublime, one that reminded him of the ‘lofty whole’ (*gaohun*) that characterizes Su’s verses: ‘I would like to ride the wind, make my home there [the bright moon] . . .’.

The Daoist allusion is apparent. Not only was an immortal’s image being invoked, but also the concept ‘hun’, which in classical literary criticism refers to a wholeness potentially charged with vital energies. In Kin-yuen Wong’s comparative study of the Kantian and Daoist sublimines, ‘hun’ is identified as a core aesthetic of the Daoist sublime, one that also has the closest signification to the Kantian sublime in Chinese aesthetics.³⁶ While my examination of the sublime in this essay extends beyond Wong’s concern with translation, the similarity between Wong and Huang is worth noting: both interpret foreign expressions with classical Chinese resources. Meanwhile, the two take very different approaches. Whereas Wong seeks to identify comparability

³² Kang-I Sun Chang, ‘Chinese “Lyric Criticism” in the Six Dynasties’, in Susan Bush and Christian Murck (eds.), *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton, 1983), 215–24.

³³ The concept of *you* is best articulated in *The Book of Zhuangzi* (c. 3rd c. BCE). Ibid. 217. For the concept of ‘unselfconsciousness’ in Daoism, specifically in relation to the *Liezi*, a text that is arguably attributed to the legendary figure Liezi, known for his wind-riding ascendance on attaining immortality, see Philip J. Ivanhoe, ‘The Theme of Unself-consciousness in the *Liezi*’, in Ronnie Littlejohn and Jeffrey Dippmann (eds.), *Riding the Wind with Liezi: New Perspectives on the Daoist Classic* (Albany, NY, 2011), 127–50.

³⁴ Huang’s quotation was recalled by Liao Fushu and Qian Renkang, who were both his students. See Liao, ‘Remembering Mr. Huang Zi’, 85; and Qian Renkang, ‘The Life, Thought, and Composition of Huang Zi’ (‘Huang Zi de shenghuo, sixiang he chuanguo’), in Beijing Zhongguo yinyuejia xiehui (ed.), *Collected Essays on Musical Construction* (*Yinyue jianshe wenji*) (Beijing, 1959), 231–62 at 247.

³⁵ Sisman, *Mozart: The ‘Jupiter’ Symphony*, 79.

³⁶ Kin-yuen Wong, ‘The Sublime in the Taoist Aesthetics: An Interpretation of Ssu-K’ung T’u’s “Ching-chien”, “Hao-fang” and “Hsiung-hun”’, *Tamkang Review*, 14 (1983), 535–51.

between the Kantian and Daoist sublims, Huang proposes a hearing that distinguishes between the two. Nevertheless, Wong's theoretical analysis of the Daoist sublime is useful here. Drawing from his structural perspective, I shall analyse a piece in Huang's acclaimed cantata *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (*Changhenge*, 1932) as a musical case that exhibits features of the Daoist sublime, one that contrasts with the vigorous sound ideal in the Kantian discourse. Despite the differences between the two modes of musical sublime, both drew from Western musical idioms to form a modern style of 'lofty music', and both were constitutive of the modern Chinese field of 'music'.

MUSIC, THE BEAUTIFUL AND SUBLIME, AND WESTERN SOUNDS

What impressed early twentieth-century music reformers about Western classical music was not only its acoustic power, but also its social significance. Unlike Western church and military music that were applied to limited ritual contexts, Western classical music epitomized the refined civilization of the modern West, manifesting supreme scientific technologies, engaging advanced public facilities, and enjoying wide social respect. Chinese school songs, a modern genre that had been in educational practice for two decades by the interwar period, were regarded as part of the West's advanced musical development. But in the opinion of music reformers, the general Chinese understanding of refined music was dangerously inadequate. The term 'music' in modern Chinese, 'yinyue', an adopted word from modern Japanese usage (formed by combining classical Chinese lexemes), connoted the modern Western concept of music as a distinctive field of art. But the circulation of the modern term did not create wide social interest in refined Western music overnight. More importantly, as Xiao Youmei (1884–1940)—Chancellor of the National Conservatory of Music and holder of a doctorate in Musikwissenschaft from Leipzig University—opined, many Chinese people did not even take music seriously.³⁷ Despite the centuries-old high regard of music in Confucian teaching and ritual culture, popular tastes and their underlying moral sensibility did not necessarily embrace refined values. Having a response not unlike a dutiful music official in the imperial era, Xiao was frustrated that many people regarded music as a trivial plaything. Worse still, many indulged themselves in making the wrong kinds of music.³⁸

The consequences were dire, according to Confucianism. Continuing Confucian musical belief, Xiao and like-minded reformers heard prevailing music as an index of the current and future socio-political situation. Making the wrong kinds of music not only signalled problems, but also corrupted the strength of the nation. Compared with the West, China fell short in both social and technological achievements, which were manifested musically. To set things right, reformers advocated a new learning and musical infrastructure based on the model of classical music practice in the West. With the support of sympathetic government officials, especially Cai—a thinker-reformist who presided over the University Council in the late 1920s³⁹—the National Conservatory of Music was established in Shanghai in 1927.⁴⁰ Working as an administrator

³⁷ Xiao Youmei, 'Why Do People in China not Highly Value Music?' ('Weishenme yinyue zai Zhongguo buwei yibanren suo zhongshi?'), *Music Magazine* (*Yinyue zazhi*), 4 (1934) 1–3 at 1.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Cai was also the first Chancellor of the National Conservatory of Music, though only briefly, as Xiao would soon take over the chancellorship until his death in 1940.

⁴⁰ The National Conservatory of Music later had to be renamed as a specialized music institute due to a change in government policy. For a study that focuses on the conservatory, see Maria M. Chow, 'Representing China Musically: A Chinese Conservatory and China's Musical Modernity 1900–1937' (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2005).

and teacher at the Conservatory with European colleagues,⁴¹ Xiao and Huang were also active in publishing their musical views in Chinese-language books and magazines. Huang remained active in creating modern Chinese compositions, mostly vocal works. Both advocated adopting Western classical music as the foundation of modern Chinese musical development, a position opposed to those who defended native Chinese music as a valid foundation for modern development.⁴² Besides hearing advanced scientific value in Western classical music, reformers admired Western sounds and culture as realizing Confucian social values, exemplifying their modern ideal of lofty music.⁴³

'Lofty' music was not merely an ideal repeated with 'empty rhetoric'—to compare it to Nazi music propaganda.⁴⁴ Reformers discussed the kinds of moral-aesthetic qualities they appreciated, and they called for the abandonment of morally corrupted music. The Chinese term for lofty, *gaoshang*, combines a sense of elevation or height (*gao*) with one's propensity (*shang*), underlining an upright disposition with noble aspirations. In an article published in 1934, Xiao called for greater moral emphasis in music education, asking teachers to be cautionary when selecting their teaching materials. Music educators should abandon 'frivolous, lascivious, and decadent' pieces, and teach only lofty music that is 'noble, beautiful, and vigorous' (*zhuangyan, youmei*, and *xiongzhuang*).⁴⁵ Such illustrative qualities of lofty music resonated with Huang's prescription advocated around the same time. Writing for a high-school music textbook published by the Commercial Press, Huang made an anxious call: 'If we do not... actively promote lofty music which has a virile greatness (*xiongwei*) to replace [those lascivious songs of Chinese and Western origins], no one can tell how low our nation will fall into decadence!'⁴⁶

Both Xiao and Huang associated lofty music with manly vigour and monumental grandeur, a sublime aesthetic that was increasingly important during the interwar period. Indeed, the term 'zhuangyan xiongwei', which Huang used to translate J. A. Fuller-Maitland's 'sublime' when describing the final movement of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony, contained exactly the same terms that Xiao and Huang himself used in the aforementioned advocacy of lofty music. The masculine quality of force and greatness, denoted by the term 'xiong', was being valued. Huang's aesthetic ideal was further elaborated by his commendation of a host of Western classical compositions. For example, in an essay in which Huang honours a friend's request to introduce

⁴¹ Europeans holding leading faculty positions included the Russian pianist Boris Zakharov and the Italian violinist Arigo Foa. Jewish members increased from the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s. For a study of Russian faculty at the Conservatory, see Hon-Lun Yang, 'The Shanghai Conservatory, Chinese Musical life, and the Russian Diaspora, 1927–1949', *Twentieth-Century China*, 37/1 (2012), 73–95. For the presence of Jewish musicians, see Buzeng Xu, 'Jews and the Musical Life of Shanghai', in Jonathan Goldstein (ed.), *Jews of China*, 2 vols. (Armonk, NY, 1999–2000), i. 230–8.

⁴² The two positions were connected in many ways, both ideologically and socially. See Joys H. Y. Cheung, 'Divide and Connections in Chinese Musical Modernity: Cases of Musical Networks Emerging in Colonial Shanghai, 1919–1937', *Twentieth-Century China*, 37/1 (2012), 30–49. The continuing practice of native Chinese music in Shanghai is a complicated issue, as it involved a variety of instrumental, vocal, and operatic genres, and they responded to the cosmopolitan and colonial environment of Shanghai in different ways. See Jonathan P. J. Stock, 'Place and Music: Institutions and Cosmopolitanism in "Shenqu", Shanghai Traditional Local Opera, 1912–1949', *Music & Letters*, 83 (2002), 542–89.

⁴³ Richard Kraus, in his remarkable study of Western classical music in modern China, describes the enthusiastic Chinese reception of the piano as an emblem of middle-class ambitions. Richard Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (New York, 1989).

⁴⁴ Reinhold Brinkmann, 'The Distorted Sublime: Music and National Socialist Ideology—A Sketch', in Mark Carroll (ed.), *Music and Ideology* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vt., 2012), 213–33.

⁴⁵ Xiao, 'Why Do People in China not Highly Value Music?', 2.

⁴⁶ Huang, 'Appreciating Music' ('Yinyue xinshang'), 96.

music that is not too difficult (such as the symphony and opera) and not too banal (such as jazz and shallow film songs) for music beginners, he discusses the vocal music of five music records recently released by R. C. A. Victor. Among his selection, Verdi's 'Anvil Chorus' from *Il Trovatore* has a section that has a moving 'manly vigour' ('xiongzhuang'), and Wagner's 'Pilgrim's Chorus' from *Tannhäuser*, also sung by male voices, has 'noble grandeur' ('zhuangyan'). Huang also characterized Wagner as the first composer after Beethoven whose style exhibited a 'manly vigour par excellence' ('xiongjian gaochao'). These musical sounds entailed the same kind of manly force and power that underlined Xiao's ideals of the 'noble' ('zhuangyan') and the 'vigorous' ('xiongzhuang') in his call for lofty music.

Xiao also recognized the beautiful (*youmei*) in the call. Similarly, Huang commended different kinds of *mei* (beauty) that he appreciated from Western classical music. In contrast to the vigour and grandeur of *xiong* (manliness), *mei* conveyed a sense of smoothness and gentleness. For example, in the previously mentioned essay in which Huang discusses a selection of recently released recordings, he described the melodies of both Eduardo di Capua's Italian song 'O sole mio' and Giuseppe Giordani's 'Caro mio Ben' as having a 'gentle beauty' ('roumei').

Often, the beautiful appeared as an aesthetic that contrasted with the sublime. In some cases, the two could be mutually exclusive qualities in polarized musical styles. For example, when Huang defended Brahms against criticism of the composer's poor tone colours, he turned the accusation around to define it as the composer's unique musical style. 'Had his orchestration sounded like Rimsky-Korsakov or Ravel', having a 'sumptuous beauty' ('huali'), then he would have had to sacrifice his 'noble and lofty sublime'.⁴⁷ (The term *li* in *huali*, which is similar to *mei*, also refers to the beautiful, but a kind that involves elaborate features.) In other cases, the beautiful and the sublime could form a complementary contrast. For example, in a different context, Huang characterized the commendable sound effects produced by Western functional harmony as a binary opposition between the 'plentifully beautiful' ('fuli') and a 'masculine whole' ('xionghun').⁴⁸ Other reformers also invoked a binary aesthetic frame. For example, writing more than a decade before Huang, Wang Guangqi (1892–1936)—who was then studying in Germany and about to enrol for a doctorate in Musikwissenschaft at the University of Berlin—characterized German classical music according to two general features: 'splendidly beautiful' ('zhuangguan youmei') and 'robust and with a manly vigour' ('ji'ang xiongjian').⁴⁹

The sublime was generally more valued in these complementary aesthetics. At a time of political crises and cultural emergencies, music reformers committed to building the nation looked for aesthetic potency that could elevate and mobilize people for socio-political causes. The musical sublime celebrating manly vigour and action responded best to such an emergency call. While similar aesthetic values were recognized in Confucian classical texts, they were seldom eulogized as supreme. More importantly, other than engaging Western music as a different musical system from the pre-modern time, the modern sublime emerged from a new intellectual foundation. Its aesthetic identity as opposed to the beautiful in a binary frame, for example,

⁴⁷ In Huang Zi's words, 'weiyen er gaochao de zhuangmei'. Huang Zi, 'Bulamusi Johanne Brahms', *Music Magazine* (*Yinyue zazhi*), 3 (1934), 16–21 at 18.

⁴⁸ Huang Zi, 'Appreciation of Music' ('Yinyue de xinshang'), *Musical Art* (*Yueyi*), 1/1 (1930), 26–37 at 31.

⁴⁹ Wang Guangqi, 'The Musical Life of the German People 2' ('Deguo ren zhi yinyue shenghuo xu'), *Shaonian Zhongguo* / *The Young China*, 4/9 (1923), 1–18 at 18.

entailed reformers' adoption of a common philosophical perspective in the modern West, one that could be traced to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which offered ideas that Kant would develop in his own analysis. When we examine closely the etymological sources of the various modern Chinese terms referring to the musical sublime, Kant's aesthetics along with its philosophical tradition evidently had a marked significance. As a translated subject in Chinese intellectual discourse on Western philosophy, Kantian aesthetics rendered the sublime as a modern Chinese musical value and experience.

THE KANTIAN SUBLIME AND CHINESE SOUNDS

Kant was introduced in Chinese publications as early as the 1900s. Influential thinkers and reformists of the time, including Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Wang (Guowei), as well as Cai, were all avid readers of and writers on Western philosophy, in addition to excelling in classical Chinese learning. Aesthetics was a crucial subject to Wang (Guowei) and Cai particularly. While Wang (Guowei) developed a new style of literary criticism integrating ideas from Western aesthetics and philosophy of life, especially from Schopenhauer, Cai led an education reform movement based eclectically on Kantian, neo-Kantian, and Russian anarchist philosophies. Also, unlike Wang (Guowei), who focused on scholarly endeavours and became deeply engaged in historical and archaeological research in later years,⁵⁰ Cai pursued a life as a public figure. Having briefly served as the first Minister of Education of the new Republican government in 1912, Cai was appointed the first Chancellor of the National Peiping (Beijing) University (1916–26) and served as the first President of the University Council afterwards (1927–8). A symbolic figure of new thinking propelling the May Fourth movement that advocated New Culture, Cai frequently gave public lectures on his aesthetic vision of education and life. His published essays, written in China, Germany, and France, proved popular reading, especially among young intellectuals. Cai failed in many parts of his education reform programme, however, and his frustrations with the government caused him to resign from his posts. Nonetheless, Cai's vision of 'aesthetic education' ('meiyu') created a certain amount of social interest for a while. More importantly, Cai offered his political resources to lobby government support for musical reform. The founding of the National Conservatory of Music in 1927 owed much to his drive. On a personal level, Cai was also bound to music reform through his acquaintance with Xiao as both had studied at Leipzig University and shared cultural visions of a modern China.⁵¹

Early in 1915, Cai introduced Western philosophy in a short primer entitled *Outline of Philosophy* (*Zhexue dagang*, 1915). According to William J. Duiker, the book 'was apparently a source for what little knowledge many Chinese students of the May Fourth period possessed about Western philosophy'.⁵² The book translated writings from contemporaries Raoul Richter (1871–1912), a philosophy professor at Leipzig University, and Friedrich Paulsen, a neo-Kantian philosopher whose ethic of self-realization had lasting influence on Cai, along with Cai's own emphases and interpretations.⁵³ The fourth section of the book was on aesthetics, discussing ideas based on Kant.⁵⁴ As

⁵⁰ Joey Bonner, *Wang Kuo-wei: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1986).

⁵¹ Wang Yong, 'Xiao Youmei's Experience of Studying at Leipzig' ('Xiao Youmei zai Laibixi'), *Art of Music* (*Yinyue shishu*), 1 (2004), 68–75 at 69.

⁵² William J. Duiker, 'The Aesthetics Philosophy of Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei', *Philosophy East and West* 22 (1972), 384–401 at 389.

⁵³ Ibid. 387–92.

⁵⁴ Cai Yuanpei, *Outline of Philosophy* (*Zhexue dagang*), (Shanghai, 1916), 78–9.

discussed in this chapter, aesthetic judgement differs from rational processes (based on Kant's pure reason) and moral processes (based on Kant's practical reason), and engages a unique realm of experiences. Besides the beautiful (*miaoli*), there also exists the sublime (*gangda*, lit. strong and grand) in the aesthetic realms of experience. Cai elaborated the sublime further, implicitly stressing the greater unfamiliarity of the concept to readers. Interestingly, however, he eschewed the Kantian perspective that pits sense and imagination against reason.

In Kant's thinking, experience of the sublime entails a type of transport that 'evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense'.⁵⁵ On encountering powerful external forces that overwhelm our sense and imagination, reason confronts the confusion and elevates the mind to a supersensible level of cognition. There are two sub-categories in the transport of sublime. In the 'mathematical sublime', which is characterized by excessive magnitude or extent, reason asserts itself during a moment of 'sheer cognitive exhaustion' to realize more fully the highest state of human condition.⁵⁶ In the 'dynamic sublime', on the other hand, encountering power associated with the might of nature leads to an ethical realization that there exists in our mind something superior to nature, something that surpasses sense and imagination.⁵⁷

In Cai's discussion of the sublime, a different set of relations is presented. The sense of contradiction setting apart the faculties of reason and sense and imagination is unimportant, if not irrelevant. Instead, the two faculties relate to each other as complementary human mental processes, contributing to the whole of human experience. When one feels powerless in trying to process or resist an overwhelming external object, '[o]ne becomes smaller and weaker, withdrawing to a realm beyond recognition. Then the so-called true self (*woxiang*) identifies with the extremely grand (*zhida*) and extremely strong (*zhigang*) itself, enjoying an infinite sense of satisfaction'.⁵⁸ The 'zhida' and 'zhigang' respectively translate Kant's 'mathematical sublime' and 'dynamic sublime', but without featuring a sense of struggle in the identification processes. What mattered the most was that an experience of the sublime could enhance human life with a tremendous sense of satisfaction. This at least entails two aspects in which Kant had impressed his Chinese translator. On the one hand, the analytical excellence of Kant in articulating the principles and processes of aesthetic satisfaction had a strong intellectual appeal; on the other, the moral implication of Kant's aesthetics was profound, as it revealed a universal source of refining and elevating human existence. At the heart of the moral implication was a 'purposeless' state of mind, a state where one's egoistic, selfish tendency is relinquished.⁵⁹ In Cai's broader intellectual engagement with both Western philosophy and Confucianism, the purposeless state best allowed individual wills to be united in harmony with the transcendent moral force in the universe. Such a view integrated Paulsen's idea of a pantheistic all-one with the Confucian belief in cosmic harmony.⁶⁰

Cai developed his 'aesthetic education' programme on the basis of such an intellectual vision. Emphasizing moral values, the programme did not privilege the importance of

⁵⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Blacksburg, Va., 2001), par. 3, 55.

⁵⁶ Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York, 1985), 40.

⁵⁷ According to Kant, sublimity resides 'only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within'. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. Meredith, para. 3, 64.

⁵⁸ Cai, *Outline of Philosophy*, 79. The translation given here uses terms provided by Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 62.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 78. Wang has eloquently identified this emphasis in the thoughts of Cai and Wang (Guowei). See Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 23.

⁶⁰ Duiker, 'The Aesthetics Philosophy of Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei', 387.

reason or rationality as in Western philosophy. Aesthetics was about a lively environment, habit, and taste. Extending well beyond classroom teachings, Cai envisaged an aesthetic cityscape populated by new citizens, whose cultivated habits and refined tastes were manifest in the layout of art galleries, concert halls, and even city streets. The aesthetic programme assumed a guiding spiritual function for the nation, a visionary goal that he first pronounced in 1917 in the lecture ‘On Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education’.⁶¹

This significant lecture established the beautiful and the sublime as two primary aesthetic values in universal human experience. The terms used in Chinese translation differed from those used in the 1915 primer of Western philosophy, expanding the lexicon in the modern Chinese language of aesthetics. (*Duli* and *chonghong* were used here to refer to the beautiful and the sublime, instead of *miaoli* and *gangda*.)⁶² Cai also noted in parenthesis how the two Western concepts had been translated in Japanese: respectively ‘youmei’ and ‘zhuangmei’,⁶³ which actually had been used by Wang (Guowei) since the 1900s.⁶⁴ While the variety of the translation sets indicates the newness of the Kantian concepts in Chinese intellectual discourse, they reflected how Chinese received those foreign concepts with openness and flexibility. In my interpretation, there are two consequences to taking such translation endeavours and attitudes as epistemological sources for the Chinese musical sublime. First, modern Chinese lexicons denoting the beautiful and the sublime were adaptive and in flux during at least the interwar period. We should therefore identify the two aesthetics as corresponding to a flexible group of terms, and extrapolate their semantic reference based on their contexts of use. This method has allowed us to examine the Kantian sublime as a loosely connected web of modern Chinese terms, which functioned even in non-Kantian contexts. Second, while there were variables in the translation, the semantic core of these terms remained basically the same. A commonly shared conceptual element among them is that they all implied a contrast with the beautiful, underlining a binary classification of aesthetic experiences.

As for modern aesthetic thought about music, although Cai did not write on musical subjects frequently, a speech that he gave in 1933 shows the validity of the binary aesthetic frame in his musical views. When the Association for Music, Art, and Literature was founded in 1933, Cai gave a speech at its inauguration ceremony, held at the National Conservatory of Music. In the speech, Cai paired the beautiful and the sublime to generate aesthetic contrasts in musical contexts. Discussing how literature and music when creatively put together could enhance both genres, Cai said: ‘So to a beautiful (*youmei*) melody, subtle lyrics can be set; to a tragically sublime (*beizhuang*) aria, robust music can be set. In both cases music and literature mutually enhance each other in their expressions.’⁶⁵ Cai’s aesthetic description echoed the musical

⁶¹ Duiker has noted August Comte’s influence on Cai’s religious view, which departed from Paulsen. Ibid. 389.

⁶² Cai Yuanpei, ‘On Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education’ (‘Yi meiyu dai zongjiao’), in *Collected Essays of Cai Yuanpei* (*Cai Yuanpei wenji, juansi meiyu*) (Taipei, 1995), 69–75 at 73. Originally published in *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*), 3/6 (1917).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Wang (Guowei) discussed the difference between *youmei* (beautiful) and *zhuangmei* (sublime) in ‘Critique of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*’ (*Hongloumeng pinglun*), published around 1904), a commentary that draws from Schopenhauer’s ideas. Through Schopenhauer, Wang (Guowei) was able to understand Kant better. See Teng Xianhui, ‘Brief Discussion of Wang Guowei’s Aesthetic Thoughts’ (‘Luelun Wang Guowei de meixue sixiang’), in Teng (ed.) and Wang Guowei, *New Exegesis to Remarks on Lyrics in the Human World* (*Renjian cihua xinzhu*) (Jinan, China, 1982), 11–12.

⁶⁵ Cai Yuanpei, ‘Inauguration Speech of Chairman Cai Yuanpei’ (‘Cai shezhang zimin xiansheng jiuzhi yanci’), *Music Magazine* (*Yinyue zazhi*), 1 (1934), 2–3 at 3.

illustration of Kantian aesthetics by Zhu Guangqian (1897–1986), who received his doctorate from the University of Strasbourg and taught Western literature and art criticism after returning to China. In ‘On the Beauty of the Strong and the Gentle’, Zhu invoked the traditional Chinese *yin* and *yang* duality, and translated the beautiful and the sublime with traditional gendered discourse. Giving musical examples from Beethoven to illustrate the two aesthetics, Zhu characterized his third and fifth symphonies as expressing ‘turbulent winds and torrential rains’ (‘kuangfeng baoyu’), which exemplify an aesthetic of ‘unshaken masculinity with tragic grandeur’ (‘chenxiong beizhuang’). Beethoven’s sixth symphony, in contrast, is ‘gentle and delicate’ (‘wenrou weiwan’), ‘like subtle murmurings’ (‘ruyuan rusu’) in a dream.⁶⁶ The former is the sublime par excellence, whereas the latter belongs to the category of the beautiful.

While the Kantian binary classification implicitly shaped modern thinkers’ aesthetic imagination relating to music, Confucian classical texts about music lent authority to their public discourse. For example, at the same inauguration speech mentioned above, Cai included three extended passages quoted from *Record of Music*. These passages, which manifested the Confucian ideal of a harmonious but hierarchical social order, celebrate musical qualities that cultivate characters of love, tenacity, and the virtues of being a state minister. Meanwhile, the classical texts recognize the invigorating effects of music that is ‘coarse and unyielding (*culi mengqi*), marked by energetic surges, vigorous exertions (*fenlai*), and a sense of violent rage (*guangfen*)’, such that music of this kind will shape a ‘strong and steadfast (*gangyi*)’ character of the people.⁶⁷

While Confucian aesthetics were cited, actual musical sounds and favourable listening experiences were rarely mentioned, if not totally ignored. The eloquent Confucian view of the mutually shaping relationship between music and the disposition of human beings served reformers’ socio-political agenda of music.⁶⁸ But their interests lay less in the aesthetic *experience* of the imperial Confucian musical culture. Indeed, Cai—like many Westernized thinkers of the time—found existing Chinese music deprived of aesthetic power. One of his quatrains, printed at the beginning of this article, expressed a private view that the sources of sublime music for him emerged not from a Confucian context, but from Beethoven.

Beethoven’s appeal to the Chinese as a noble musical icon was reflected in a web of romanticized literary and biographical representations.⁶⁹ But reformers admired the

⁶⁶ Zhu Guangqian, ‘On the Beauty of the Strong and the Gentle’ (‘Gangxing mei yu rouxing mei’), in *Literary Psychology* (*Wenyi xinlixue*) (Beijing, 1937), 419–36 at 422. As Ban Wang has pointed out, Zhu’s gender discourse was close to the traditional Chinese gendered aesthetic, associating the strong and sturdy with man, the soft and gentle with woman. See Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 116.

⁶⁷ Cai, ‘Inauguration Speech’, 2. Translation from Scott Cook, “Yue Ji” 樂記 Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Commentary, *Asian Music*, 26/2 (1995), 1–96 at 57.

⁶⁸ During the New Life Movement launched by the Nationalist government around 1934, citing from Confucian texts helped to ensure one’s political correctness. The movement was intended culturally to strengthen Chinese citizens with mixed values of Confucianism, Christianity, and Republicanism, though its coercive measures of censorship disturbed society in many ways. While the movement caused leading music reformers to be involved in new musical productions—from musical writings in newspapers, to music programmes on radio, to film music, the Confucian moral discourse had been underlying music reform programmes since early in the century. ‘Song of Familial Bliss’ (‘Tianlun ge’), a film song composed by Huang for the movement, shows the complex relationship between politics and modernity in Chinese music. Cheung, ‘Singing Ancient Piety and Modernity’, 20–3.

⁶⁹ A notable literary work on the ‘Beethoven-like’, romantic hero was the novel *Jean-Christophe* (1913) by Romain Rolland (1866–1944), who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915. The novel was translated into Chinese by Fu Lei—an important art and music critic—in the 1930s, and was widely read. Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 70–2. For a discussion of Chinese biographies of great Western composers, showing how Confucian moral values were projected onto them, see Cheung, ‘Chinese Music and Translated Modernity’, 290–307. While Fu’s translation and those

romantic genius at the expense of native Chinese music. As Cai's quatrain mockingly noted, the native Chinese music that he had heard was regrettably—and shockingly—inadequate, lacking profound aspirations (*lixiang*) and artistic grandeur (*shenhong*). Cai's frustration resonated with Huang, who made a similar criticism of pre-existing Chinese music. For both, the powerful musical sounds that impressed their listeners in orthodox Confucian performance contexts had become obsolete in modern times. Despite their interests in historical orchestras, operas,⁷⁰ and Confucian musical ideologies, the aesthetic efficacy of past Chinese music remained a forgettable myth. The sublime sounds of an imperial state sacrifice to Heaven during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) as described by Zhou Mi (1232–98), a thirteenth-century writer and petty official, in his *Memoir of Wulin* (*Wulin jiushi*, c.1290), present just such an example of forgotten aesthetic efficacy. When the sacrificial music was performed, 'the tens of thousands of ritual observers were silent. The heavenly breeze delivers the [wonderful] sounds of the jade rings..., as if they had come from the Ninth Heaven'.⁷¹ The reference to the 'Ninth Heaven', the most scared part of the cosmos, suggests a sublime that harmonizes and transcends the mundane. When Zhou wrote about the ritual and sounds, he was actually remembering a past dynasty, as the Mongolian empire had already taken over the Southern Song dynasty and established the Yuan.⁷² While Zhou treasured the memory of 'heavenly sounds' of a fallen dynasty, Cai, Huang and many like-minded reformers did not find inspiration in music developed from the earlier imperial era. In their modern world, the sounds of imperial state rituals were defunct and the Confucian musical sublime was a past, and sonically ignorable, ideal rather than a living aesthetic.⁷³

THE WIND-RIDE POETICS OF THE IMMORTALS AND THE DAOIST SUBLIME

The living aesthetic that music reformers heard in Western and Westernized repertoires was not limited to the Kantian sublime and its Confucian interpretation. Huang heard a transcendent aesthetic that differed from the Kantian sublime in Chinese translation in the 'Jupiter' Symphony. According to two of his former students, Liao Fushu (1907–2002) and Qian Renkang (1914–2013)—both of whom were important music scholars in their own right—the second movement of the symphony appealed to Huang as it invoked classical Chinese images and poetics. Deploying Chinese aesthetic

Chinese music biographies most likely appeared after Cai had written the quatrain, they reflect the wide appeal of Beethoven or music composers as romantic heroes among early 20th-c. Chinese. As shown by Kraus, the romantic ideal held among Chinese musicians prevailed through subsequent decades into the Maoist and even post-Maoist periods. Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 44, 208.

⁷⁰ Both Xiao and Wang (Guangqi) wrote their doctoral dissertations in Germany (in 1916 and 1934 respectively) on historical subjects. Xiao, supervised by Hugo Riemann at the University of Leipzig, undertook a historical study on Chinese orchestras before the 17th c. Wang, who graduated from the University of Bonn, examined the history of Chinese classical opera, primarily Kun Opera and Peking Opera.

⁷¹ Zhou Mi, *Wulin jiushi* (*Memoir of Wulin*), ed. Li Xiaolong and Zhao Ruiping (Beijing, 2007), 16. The translation is adapted from Joseph S. C. Lam, 'Music, Sound, and Site: A Case Study from Southern Song China (1127–1275)', in Pei-kai Cheng and Ka Wai Fan (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Research of Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong, 2013), 99–118 at 111. As Lam describes, the musical moment here, manifesting the Confucian ideal of the highest music known as *yue*, is a 'moment of total control and harmony'.

⁷² Liu Jing, *Study on Zhou Mi* (*Zhou Mi yanjiu*) (Beijing, 2012), 111.

⁷³ Even the modern thinker Zong Baihua (1897–1986), who commended the Confucian ritual state as the ideal state of life, drew references from classical literature and arts only, without presenting musical examples to illustrate the ideal. Zhang Qiqun, 'A Study on Zong Baihua's Aesthetics: System Consciousness, Concepts, and Methodology of Modern Chinese Aesthetics' ('Zong Baihua de meixue yanjiu: xiandai Zhongguo meixue de tixi yishi, guannian he fangfa'), in *A Brief History of Chinese Aesthetics in the Past Hundred Years* (*Bainian Zhongguo meixue shilue*) (Beijing, 2005), 105–82.

notions commonly used in classical literary criticism, Huang praised the second movement as having a lofty whole (*gaohun*) in its atmospheric appearance (*qixiang*). The ‘ride the wind’ image that he cited from the *ci* poem of the eleventh-century poet Su characterized a poetic occasion (*jingjie*) marked by a soaring appeal, which quickly generated a fear of being high up in a celestial body.

The concept of *jingjie*, or poetic occasion, underlines the importance of lyric archetypes in classical Chinese poetry. As Chi Xiao has discussed, archetypal depiction contained in a fragment of time entails a ‘packaged moment’ that ‘constantizes’ men’s emotional responses to the world.⁷⁴ In the archetypal practice, a single aesthetic moment that does not rely on an underlying narrative teleology bridges to another instant without any continuity in time. (Chi) Xiao describes the poetically charged moment as an ‘archi-occasion’. What Huang invoked is one such ‘packaged moment’ in the classical lyrical tradition, though instead of presenting his own archetypal imageries he quoted from Su’s verses. In that packaged moment, the difference between Su’s time (almost a thousand years earlier) and Huang’s present no longer exists. The scenic objects invested with Su’s emotional response and aspiration here become Huang’s poetic moment, response, and aspiration. What had inspired the rise of such an ‘archi-occasion’ in Huang was his listening to the second movement of the ‘Jupiter’ Symphony.

According to Qian, the muted sound of the violins at the beginning of the movement caused Huang to imagine how the Roman god Jupiter lived alone high above in the heavens. The poetic scene, for Huang, resonated with the ‘heavenly’ aesthetic that had been so impressively captured in Su’s ‘Water Melody’.⁷⁵ Su’s verses cited by Huang depict the transcendent environment of an immortal’s place on the moon, while expressing ‘fear’ since the winds are too cold to bear, and the solitude is too lonely to withstand.

Su’s wind-riding journey involves, first, an overwhelming external stimulation, which leads to a fearful response. The sequential order here echoes the first half of Kant’s passage of transport. But Su’s aspiration to fly is too whimsical for the Kantian passage; indeed, the act of ascending to the moon was too impractical for Chinese nation-building reformers as well. However, the whimsical act had for a long time enriched the classical poetic imagination in remarkable ways, and the resulting literary images continued to be impressively persuasive in aesthetic terms in Huang’s time.

Su’s aspiration to ride the wind in the poem alludes to a common lore of ascension in Daoist immortals’ stories and practices.⁷⁶ Here, the immortal being that is referred to is the legendary Chang’e, a woman in mythological time who ascended to the moon after taking an elixir, and has lived there since. The ‘porphyry towers’ and ‘jade eaves’ refer to the palace on the moon where Chang’e lives; they are also a common description of the immortals’ land in Daoist lore. Whereas the marvellous places made with gem treasures are admired by Daoists, for Su they are too high, cold, and lonely. Nonetheless, for a while he has embraced the Daoist aspiration to fly like an immortal. More importantly, as a poet his interest in Daoism was a source of

⁷⁴ Chi Xiao, ‘Lyric Archi-Occasion: Coexistence of “Now” and “Then”’, *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR), 15 (1993), 17–35 at 19–20.

⁷⁵ Qian, ‘The Life, Thought, and Composition of Huang Zǐ’, 247.

⁷⁶ Livia Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy: Hsi Sheng Ching, the Scripture of Western Ascension* (Albany, NY, 1991). Benjamin Penny, ‘Immortality and Transcendence’, in Livia Kohn (ed.), *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden, 2000), 109–33.

inspiration for his literary creation. In the poem, the imaginative experience of ascending to the moon palace and the sensual invocation of ‘porphyry towers’ and ‘jade eaves’, felt with cold winds blown in the heights, establish an extraordinary aesthetic mood at the beginning of the poem. Even after the poet withdraws from the imaginary moon journey back to his bedroom, the immortal’s transcendent aesthetic pervades. As the poet describes, the ecstatic scene that meets his eyes is no less charming—‘how can it be from a mortal’s world!’⁷⁷ The moon shining through the window casts a lively shadow of the poet, enticing him to dance with it. The transcendent presence of the moon throughout the poem was the heavenly source that places the mortal realm contiguously with the immortal one. In fact, Daoism sees a continuum between the mortals and immortals. The mortals through correct mind–body practice can attain immortality, and immortals often live near to or even among the mortals, instead of existing on a different plane of life.⁷⁸ The proximity of Daoist immortals, in addition to their carefree life attitude and magical power, had inspired poets of many generations to feature immortals’ lives in their works directly or indirectly. Such poems, which were regarded as a specific genre by the Six Dynasty period, are classified as ‘immortals’ poetry’ (‘youxian shi’).

Su was not only familiar with this poetic tradition, but also contributed to it with his creative style.⁷⁹ He also fused Daoist immortals’ motifs with his different kinds of literary writing. For example, in his rhapsodic essay ‘At Red Cliffs II’ (‘Hou Chibi fu’, 1082), which recounts an evening boat-ride he had just enjoyed with a few friends meandering along the river through the mountains at Red Cliffs, Su suggests a possible encounter with an immortal. He tells how he met two Daoists in a dream after the trip, and suggests one of them is the crane that flew over their boat earlier that night. Interpretations of Su’s Daoist symbols are diverse among scholars, given that the details that he carefully constructed did not necessarily reflect what had actually happened. As Robert Hegel has argued, the self-reflexive outlook of the essay should not be taken literally as a veritable account of reality. Rather, it is a literary creation of an ingenious writer who could adopt different personas in the narrative. Su’s invocation of Daoist immortals’ images and his contradictory feelings about their transcendent world was an aesthetic engagement itself. Nonetheless, in real life Su did practise Daoist longevity techniques, as studies have shown.⁸⁰ Immortals were never absurd creatures for the poet, but were mysterious and inspiring.

Su was self-conscious of both his aspiration and hesitation to pursue Daoist immortality, as reflected in his repeated admission of fear in high places. But that is what accounts for the perennial charm of his literary works. On the one hand, the resonant power of Su’s works lies in his self-depiction as a solitary figure who is not a hero, but a most wonderful human being who is ‘frustrated, anxious, sad, alone, hopeful, philosophical’.⁸¹ On the other, his poetic charm comes from his ability to ‘communicate through rich imagery’ with ‘staggering creativity’.⁸² In classical Chinese literary criticism, Su’s *ci* poems are generally praised as having a spontaneous and carefree style

⁷⁷ Watson, *Su Tung-Po*, 67.

⁷⁸ Chi-tim Lai, ‘Ko Hung’s Discourse of Hsien-Immortality’, *Numen*, 45/2 (1998), 183–220.

⁷⁹ Zhong Laiyin, *Su Shi and Philosophical and Religious Daoism* (*Su Shi yu daojia daojiao*) (Taipei, 1990). I would like to thank Ka Wai Fan for bringing this work to my attention.

⁸⁰ Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed*, 240–1.

⁸¹ Robert E. Hegel, ‘The Sights and Sounds of Red Cliffs: On Reading Su Shi’, *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR), 20 (1998), 11–30 at 30.

⁸² *Ibid.*

that is associated with Daoist aspirations. The nineteenth-century critic Liu Xizai (1813–81), for example, characterized Su's *ci* poems as having 'the transcendent poise of the immortals'.⁸³ Among his *ci* poems, 'Water Melody' has achieved considerable acclaim. While Su wrote the poem to express how he missed his brother under the full moon, the rich imageries of the immortals he used and the way he freely depicted his Daoist aspiration, fear, and comfort created an impressive set of allusions not typically found in poems on familial separation. Wang (Guowei) in his *Remarks on Lyrics in the Human World* (*Renjian cihua*, 1908), which cited Schopenhauer's ideas of art alongside his own original interpretations, ranked the poem highly, saying that it has 'a rare lofty character that cannot be evaluated as an ordinary work'.⁸⁴

When Huang quoted from 'Water Melody' to characterize the second movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony, he chose verses that best realized the rare lofty character of the poem. The passage 'I would like to ride the wind, make my home there [the bright moon]' features Su's wind-riding aspiration. In Daoism, ascension into the sky—'ascend into the heaven in broad daylight'—was an important symbol for achieving immortality.⁸⁵ The focus of Daoist practices is purification of the mind and body. For practitioners who do not actively seek ascension, or have not yet reached that stage, purification techniques are for attaining a spiritually calm but vibrant state of life, good health, and profound insights.⁸⁶ The aesthetics associated with the spiritually enhanced state, whether in a complete state of transcendence that manifests itself in ascension or not, can be characterized as the Daoist sublime—an aesthetic and analytic concept that integrates the Daoist approach of life with the modern discourse of the sublime.

The Kantian and Daoist traditions thus both recognize the state of transcendence as a passage of elevation. Whereas ascension of the body in Daoism manifests one's enlightened extension beyond ordinary limits, the passage of transport in the Kantian tradition empowers one to experience the limitlessness of infinity. However, the fundamental understanding of self sets the two traditions apart in approaching self-enhancement. The Daoist pursuit of immortality seeks a state of being one with the *dao*, a state that underlines the returning of the self to the whole physically, emotionally, and mentally. In contrast, the Kantian exaltation of reason during the elevating passage of transport operates at the expense of other faculties of cognition. Instead of undergoing a unifying process as in the Daoist path, the sense and imagination need to be crushed.

Notwithstanding such differences, Wong has endeavoured to identify similar structural properties between the Kantian sublime (as a Western discourse) and the Daoist sublime. He locates a classical Chinese aesthetic that best translates the Kantian sublime in the influential work of literary criticism 'The Twenty-Four Orders of Poetry' ('Shipin'), attributed to Sikong Tu (837–908) of the Tang dynasty.⁸⁷ In the work, twenty-four categories of aesthetics are commented upon through a set of poems—a common writing style in classical literary criticism. Among them, Wong finds that the aesthetic 'xionghun', which he translates as 'masculine whole', has a kind of

⁸³ Liu Xizai, *Outline of Literary Arts: Ci and Qu* (*Yigai: Cigu gai*). Cited in Teng (ed.) and Wang Guowei, *New Exegesis*, 98.

⁸⁴ Teng (ed.) and Wang Guowei, *New Exegesis*, 54.

⁸⁵ Livia Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy*, 15.

⁸⁶ Jennifer Oldstone-Moore, *Taoism: Origins, Beliefs, Practices, Holy Texts, Sacred Places* (New York, 2003).

⁸⁷ The 9th-c. work is frequently cited in contemporary scholarship. Wang uses it to show how Zhu's gendered discourse of the sublime invoked traditional aesthetics. Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 116–17. Chang uses it to support her arguments on Daoist concepts and values in classical literary criticism. Chang, 'Chinese "Lyric Criticism"', 217–18.

philosophical signification that is most comparable to Kant's sublime.⁸⁸ Sikong's commentary poem that explicates this aesthetic proceeds from the Daoist idea that emptiness is the supreme condition of energy and power. Through the verses 'Back to the Void into the Whole; Amass strength into masculinity', Sikong poetically refers to the mysterious, ultimate 'Void' ('xu') through which one returns to the cosmic 'Whole' ('hun'). Vital energy and power being amassed in the process is consummated in a potent state of masculinity—hence the aesthetic term 'masculine whole'.⁸⁹ The state termed 'masculine whole' contains 'all phenomena' and transcends 'all objects'; it is so powerfully encompassing that no restraint can impede its vitality, which comprises a source of infinitude that 'comes without end'. Wong compares the dynamics of returning and amassing here to the Kantian dynamics of transport, both moving towards infinitude. The concept of the Whole, or *hun* in Chinese, has a special significance here. It bears the mark of 'an undifferentiated Oneness, a unit of multiplicity, a totalization of whatever there is which embraces even the Ultimate Void'.⁹⁰ 'Hun' thus denotes an aesthetic condition in which multiplicities gather to unite, manifesting an inexhaustible whole in the process. Such an aesthetic can be compared to the Kantian 'mathematical sublime', where reason takes confused senses and imaginations to a higher order of totality. For Wong to name such an aesthetic as the Daoist sublime invokes its comparability to the Kantian sublime while characterizing its distinctive Daoist conceptual references and aesthetic properties.

Interestingly, *hun* was the term that Huang used to describe the second movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony. It is also what he had aesthetically identified with Su's poetic, wind-riding aspiration in 'Water Melody'. Viewed from Wong's comparative perspective, Huang's remark concerning the *hun* engages a discourse of the Daoist sublime.⁹¹ The exact term that Huang used was 'gaohun', which characterizes *hun* as being lofty (*gao*). The 'undifferentiated Oneness' of *hun*—to invoke Wong's idea—here describes an elevated state that transcends the mundane and encompasses everything, a state that is vital and powerful, but also solitary. As Huang's student Qian recollected, the muted violins at the beginning of the second movement of the symphony had sounded to Huang as an expression of the loneliness of the powerful god Jupiter residing in a lofty place.⁹² As potent as the state of godly transcendence could be, therefore, the underlying aesthetic mood involved detached, distant, and lonely feelings. Such an aesthetic contrasted with the manly *xiong* or assertiveness as musically imagined in Huang's time. As discussed earlier, the manly *xiong* aesthetic as in 'xiongchen', 'xiongwei', and 'xiongzhuang', which stress virile strength and monumental grandeur, characterized a notion of the sublime that underlay the Chinese translation of Kant. Interestingly, Huang's term 'gaohun' did not follow Sikong to combine *xiong* with *hun*.

⁸⁸ The other two aesthetics that Wong has identified as related to the sublime, 'jingjian' ('vigorous and strong') and 'haofang' ('untrammelled'), have, respectively, rhetorical and natural dimensions that are closer to the Longinian than the Kantian sublime. Wong, 'The Sublime in the Taoist Aesthetics', 537–46.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 537.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 550.

⁹¹ In the accounts given by Huang's two students, only Liao included the term 'gaohun' when recalling Huang's teaching session. This raises the question as to whether or not Liao put the term *gaohun* in Huang's mouth; if so, my analysis of *hun* should apply more appropriately to Liao's interpretation. It was nevertheless Huang's invocation of the Daoist aesthetics and of Su's Daoist transcendence in 'Water Melody' that inspired Liao's *hun* interpretation, which articulates the Daoist sublime with a classical aesthetic concept.

⁹² Qian, 'The Life, Thought, and Composition of Huang Zi', 247.

(as in *xionghun*),⁹³ thus eschewing the invocation of masculinity that had been more commonly associated with the Kantian sublime. In Sikong's classical discourse, masculinity refers to the amassing of vital strength but without the dominant style of the Kantian sublime—a style that has been criticized by proponents of the feminine sublime as having 'an attempt to master or dominate its objects of rapture'.⁹⁴ While Huang's *hun* entailed notions of the Daoist sublime developed in classical discourse, and shunned the Kantian dominating style, it was not entirely similar to Sikong's Daoist sublime, and engaged an expressive context that was unprecedented.

Indeed, Su in 'Water Melody' does not attain the fullest state of Daoist transcendence. He does not complete his wind-riding aspiration to become an immortal, but stays in the mortal world, where he continues to engage with emotional attachment, missing his brother. His poetic depiction of the 'porphyry towers' and 'jade eaves' in the moon palace is therefore not a triumphant, ultimate paradise. As Huang understood, there was a sense of loneliness in those high and cold places for Su, and Huang heard a similar sense of loneliness in the second movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony. Human feelings of the mortal world were therefore integrated within the Daoist sublime that Huang celebrated in both 'Water Melody' and the 'Jupiter' Symphony.

Interestingly, the way that fear and a sense of loneliness are imbued in Su's Daoist poetics echoes Scott Burnham's analysis of the second movement as having an 'uncanny melding of the deeply personal and the transcendently suprapersonal, the inner worldly and other worldly'.⁹⁵ The use of the subdominant harmony (B flat major), which anchors the ambiguous opening harmony of the movement in bar 7 and reappears as the subdominant after a bass descent by thirds (from F through D to B flat) in bars 36–7, preceded by repeated progressions of the circle of fifths, is heard by Burnham as 'filling an increasingly expansive inner space' of the personal.⁹⁶ But the rich emotional expressivity also presents a sense of remote transcendence that is 'archly ultramundane'.⁹⁷ Such an interpretation strikes a chord with Huang's invocation of Su's poetic scene, where an aspiration to achieve transcendence meets the contradictory fear of abiding in the high places of transcendence. The 'uncanny melding of the deeply personal and the transcendently suprapersonal' as heard by Burnham echoes the ambivalent coexistence of fear of loneliness and whimsical aspiration to ride the wind as heard by Huang.

⁹³ Huang used the term '*xionghun*' on another occasion to refer to the sublime of the Kantian style. As discussed earlier, Huang characterized the commendable sound effects produced by Western functional harmony as a binary: 'plentifully beautiful' ('*fuli*') and 'in masculine whole' ('*xionghun*'). See above, n. 48.

⁹⁴ Barbara Claire Freeman, 'Feminine Sublime', in Michael Kelly (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, iv (New York, 1998), 331–4 at 332. In China, a feminine vision of the sublime was first presented by Liang Zongdai (1903–83), who refuted Zhu's dominant mode of the Kantian sublime. Wang, *The Sublime Figure*, 118–22. The *yin-yang* duality has nuanced implications in Chinese gender. The different models of Chinese masculinity are theorized in Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (New York, 2002). The androgynous ideal in relation to Daoism is discussed in Roger T. Ames, '[D]aoism and the Androgynous Ideal', *Historical Reflections*, 8/3 (1981), 21–45.

⁹⁵ Burnham, *Mozart's Grace*, 114.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 109. The unusual expressivity of the movement is also discussed by Sisman. She has noted how the 'personal' figurations are presented amid complex layering of voices, with workings of elisions and expansions that are developed early in the movement (bb. 1–18). In what she termed a 'hyperexpressive' context, 'emotional striving' is heard. The 'hyperexpressive' context at the beginning is intensified by transitional passages and a 'structurally unnecessary' secondary development in the recapitulation. The powerful orchestral force of the piece, including the bridge in the exposition and development, creates what Sisman has called 'the distant sublime'. Sisman, *Mozart: The 'Jupiter' Symphony*, 38, 55–62.

⁹⁷ Burnham, *Mozart's Grace*, 109.

Among Huang's almost sixty vocal works composed after returning from New Haven,⁹⁸ a piece in the cantata *The Everlasting Sorrow* (*Changheng*) arguably best expresses the Daoist sublime. Before turning to this piece, a brief introduction to the cantata is in order.

The cantata tells the story of the legendary romance between Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (popularly known as Tang Ming Huang, 685–762) and his beloved concubine Yang Guifei (719–56), whose execution was ordered during an internal rebellion that caused the emperor to flee the occupied capital city together with his family and imperial guards. During the escape, the emperor is forced by the imperial guards to kill his beloved Yang, who is blamed as the cause for the ills the state has suffered. The emperor, having finally yielded and ordered Yang to be killed, is left with everlasting sorrow.

The tale is based on several classical literary works that feature this tragic romance, one of them a poem written by the Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi (772–846). The librettist, Harold H. T. Wei (known in Chinese as Wei Hanzhang, 1905–93), named the cantata after the title of Bai's poem, and took verses of the poem to name the ten parts of the cantata.⁹⁹ The libretto was also written in the classical poetic style. Huang and Wei started to work on the cantata shortly after the Japanese had bombed northern Shanghai in early 1932, preceded by their invasion of Manchuria in north-eastern China the previous year. They intended the choral work to fill the lack of Chinese choral music materials for their students at the National Conservatory of Music,¹⁰⁰ and to present a cautionary message that ignorance in governance would tragically cause a great kingdom to fall.¹⁰¹ The Daoist aesthetics of the piece, therefore, entail an allegorical approach to realize a nationalistic ethic.¹⁰² It also accommodated human emotions of longing in its aesthetic depiction of the immortals' transcendent world.

Emotional expressiveness was integral to Huang's view of music, based on both his compositional and listening perspectives. In his lecture 'The Appreciation of Music', given at Shanghai College of Fine Arts shortly after he returned from the United States in 1929 and published in the magazine *Musical Art* (*Yueyi*) the following year, Huang proposed that music consisted of three dimensions: the sensual, the emotional, and the intellectual.¹⁰³ For the emotional dimension, Huang held forth the classical

⁹⁸ During Huang's short lifespan, he also composed a symphonic piece for the film *City Scenes* (*Dushi fengguang*, 1935), entitled *Fantasia of City Scenes* (*Dushi fengguang huanxiangqu*). Huang's graduation piece at Yale, a symphonic overture entitled *In Memoriam* (in Chinese, *Huajiu*), was performed by the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra in Shanghai in 1930, a year after its premiere in New Haven. According to Dai Penghai, Huang composed eighty musical works after returning from New Haven. Dai Penghai, 'Let History Testify: Preface to "Chronology of Huang Zi"' ('Rang lishi zuozheng: xiezai "Huang Zi nianpu" qianmian'), *Art of Music* (*Yinyue yishu*), 4 (1982), 29–40 at 29.

⁹⁹ These are: I. Heavenly Music Blown Softly in the Palace's Air; II. Romancing the Everlasting Palace on the Double Seventh Night; III. War Drums from Yuyang Making the Whole Earth Tremble; IV. Shaking apart the Music of 'Rainbow Skirts, Feathered Coats'; V. The Deadly Military Strike; VI. The Tragic Beauty Perishing before the Horses; VII. Bells in the Rain of Night Breaking the Heart; VIII. Immortals' Mountains in the Misty Void; IX. Western Palace Filled with Autumn Weeds; X. Sorrows Destined to Last Forever.

¹⁰⁰ Harold H. T. Wei, 'Preface' ('Xu'), *The Everlasting Sorrow: A Cantata* (*Changheng ge: Qingchangju*) (Hong Kong, 1955).

¹⁰¹ Dai Penghai, 'Preface' ('Xu'), in *Collected Works of Huang Zi: Vocal Works* (*Huang Zi yizuo ji: shengyue zuopin*) (Hefei, China, 1997), 7.

¹⁰² Allegorical practices in nationalist writings are addressed by Fredric Jameson in his 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15 (1986), 65–88. The article is controversial for its orientalist thinking, as Jameson characterized the use of 'national allegories' as a third-world literary practice, which is unable to produce canonical literature. Imre Szeman, 'Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100 (2001), 803–27.

¹⁰³ Huang, 'Appreciation of Music'. Drawing from concepts and works of Western classical music, Huang regarded the intellectual dimension as the most difficult one to grasp, as it required an understanding of technical concepts and structure in musical organization, all of which were new Western learning for most Chinese at that time. The

Confucian notion that musical composition ‘is born in the heart’ of the composer.¹⁰⁴ Huang took the notion for granted without giving the source of this idea. His discussion focused on the variety of musical means that could work towards expressing emotions, ranging from the use of tonality and rhythmic patterns to choice of instrumental timbre. Also, having internalized the Confucian notion that music comes from someone’s inner self, Huang regarded music as a faithful reflection of the composer’s authentic life conditions. Examples he gave include Beethoven’s struggle with deafness and the poignancy of the opening theme of his Fifth Symphony.

Huang composed music to seven of the ten parts of the cantata.¹⁰⁵ The seven pieces cover such diverse topics as romantic ecstasy, military rebellion, fatal accusation, and remorse from lost love. In Part Eight, ‘Immortals’ Mountains’, the emperor has come to the immortals’ land Penglai to try to meet his late concubine, believing that she has become a lady fairy there. But the visit only causes a group of lady fairies to tease the emperor about his stupidity and vanity. Compared with other parts of the cantata, ‘Immortals’ Mountains’ best illustrates how Huang musically imagined the Daoist sublime to be related to the lore of immortality and transcendence. The libretto describes the ethereal world of the immortals’ land, and the lady fairies’ mockery of illusory love in the human world:

Deep in the fragrant mist, where auspicious clouds gather afloat, is the Cave of Void on the immortals’ island Penglai, where, on porphyry flowers and jade trees, dew-laden petals and leaves grow lush. How laughable he is! In the vast sea of the red dust, how many seeds of love passion are planted by the fools? Partings and reunion, sorrow and joy, in vain they made their illusory love dreams. How unfathomable for them! That the flower reflected in a glass, or the moonlight mirrored in the water, is indeed nothing.¹⁰⁶

Huang’s music for this part of the cantata captures the transcendent ambience while expressing a sense of lost love. His songs are generally known for their lyric grace, but besides appreciating his mastership of melodic smoothness, critics have turned to classical Chinese aesthetics to characterize those songs that invoke the Daoist sublime.¹⁰⁷ The music for ‘Immortals’ Mountains’ bears out at least some of these features. As shown in Pls. 1–2, from Huang’s handwritten manuscript, the piece was written for three female parts, accompanied by the piano. The harmonic design of the piece is notably bland. According to Qian, the piece harmonically features a ‘pure blandness’ (‘qingdan’), ‘debonair elegance’ (‘piaoyi’), and ‘gentle smoothness’ (‘rouhe’).¹⁰⁸ Set in a pentatonic tonality based on the *la* mode (*yu* mode in the Chinese system) in C, the music has a slowly paced, even at times static, sense of harmonic progression. Alternation between C minor and E flat major chords is prominent, with frequent invocation of the subdominant F chord, which nonetheless remains ambiguous regarding its tonality. Its minor third A flat, which is the fourth scale degree of the E flat scale, is

musical means of expressing emotion is an important topic for Huang. See Huang Zi, ‘Emotional Expressiveness of Musical Modes and Tonality’ (‘Diaoxing de biaoqing’), *Music Magazine* (*Yinyue zazhi*), 2 (1934), 24–9.

¹⁰⁴ Huang, ‘Appreciation of Music’, 32. Cook, “Yue Ji” 樂記, 24.

¹⁰⁵ The three parts that Huang did not have a chance to compose before his untimely death in 1938 were set to music by his student Lin Shengxi (1914–91) forty years later.

¹⁰⁶ The translation is mine.

¹⁰⁷ In an extreme characterization, Huang’s music is praised as transcending the mundane, ‘as if not written by someone who eats the food of mortal men’. Liu Ching-chih, *A Critical History of New Music in China I* (*Zhongguo xin yinyue, shang*) (Taipei, 1998), 154.

¹⁰⁸ Qian, ‘The Life, Thought, and Composition of Huang Zi’, 259.

李惟宁词 8. 山花雀無繡繡間 黃自作曲

andante sostenuto.
mp
rit.

A Tempo
pp 音 霧 迷 濛 祥 雲 掩
pp 音 霧 迷 濛 祥 雲 掩
A Tempo
pp 祥 雲 掩
pp 擁 蓬萊 仙 島 清 虛 洞 瓊 花 玉 樹
pp 擁 蓬萊 仙 島 瓊 花 玉 樹
p 瓊 花 玉 樹

(1)

PL. 1. The first page of the manuscript score of Huang Zi's 'Immortals' Mountains in the Misty Void', 1932-3. Reproduced by permission of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Library, 'Huang Zi Manuscripts File' ('Huang Zi shougao dang'an'), SHCML 2013/001 MS068 047

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged, yellowed paper. The score is written in Western musical notation with Chinese lyrics. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has three staves with lyrics: 露華濃, 蓬萊仙島, 清虛洞. The second system has three staves with lyrics: 瓊花, 玉樹, 霓華. The third system has three staves with lyrics: 瓊花, 玉樹, 霓華. The score includes various musical markings such as *p*, *rit...*, *pp*, and *a Tempo*. There are also blue ink markings, including a large 'X' on the left side of the second and third systems. The page is numbered (2) at the bottom center.

Pl. 2. The second page of the manuscript score of Huang Zi's 'Immortals' Mountains in the Misty Void', 1932–33. Reproduced by permission of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Library, 'Huang Zi Manuscripts File' ('Huang Zi shougao dang'an'), SHCML 2013/001 MS068 048

usually omitted in order to maintain an overall pentatonic tonality. The only exception is during a brief modulation, when A flat is used temporarily to assert the tonality of *doh* mode (*gong* mode in Chinese) in A flat (e.g. bb. 22–3).¹⁰⁹ Dissonances created by the added seventh in many cases add to the sparse feeling of chords (e.g. b. 14), while leaving their hollow qualities undisturbed.

While the bland harmonic style creates a sense of emotional aloofness, which could be heard as embodying the state of purity in the immortals' land, the polyphonic texture of the three lady fairies' voices maintains a consistent vitality and expansiveness throughout. Unlike the final movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony, the polyphonic texture is not guided by excess and does not generate an overwhelming effect to be resolved. Rather, the controlled interweaving of voices establishes multiple lines that create grandeur through a detached style. To invoke Wong's ideas on the Daoist sublime and Sikong's aesthetic comment on the 'masculine whole' ('xionghun'), we can interpret the grandeur here as embodying the movement of 'totalization' in the whole. The listener's senses are aroused, but not overwhelmed as in the Kantian tradition; the vibrant movement of the voices underlines a unifying relation of being one with the whole, not striving to confuse and crush the limits of their interrelation. The bland harmonic effects can be heard as realizing the emptiness of the void. The music and the poetic texts also contribute mutually to the Daoist sublime. Corresponding to the textual depiction of love as illusory and vanity, distant feelings of loneliness can be heard from the same harmonic blandness that generates the impression of sublime purity and emptiness in the immortals' land. The sparse sense of loss is integral to the feeling of sublime nothingness.

Melodically, the overall pentatonic style of 'Immortals' Mountains' colours the Daoist sublime with a special dimension of Chineseness in Huang's music. The vocal melodies of the piece are based on a traditional Chinese song entitled 'Song of Pure Peace' ('Qingping diao'), which was not a frequent practice for Huang.¹¹⁰ The song, which was brought to Japan by the former Ming-dynasty court musician Wei Shuanghou (d. 1689) in the mid-seventeenth century, appeared in modern Chinese music publications in the 1900s.¹¹¹ The title and texts of 'Pure Peace' are taken from another Tang-dynasty poem that features the same tragic romance of Emperor Xuanzong, one written by Li Bai (701–62). Huang drew from the melody of 'Pure Peace', which is most likely of vernacular origin, to create melodies for 'Immortals' Mountains'. His melodic design fits the intonation of Wei's libretto, while presenting refined elegance in melodic shaping and phrasing in an adopted Western style.¹¹²

The expression of the Daoist sublime in 'Immortals' Mountains' contrasts with the pre-modern approach epitomized by the *qin* practice. In the rich classical imagination developed by *qin* practitioners, one group of pieces features as its subject what Robert van Gulik has classified as 'The Mystic Journey' in Daoism. Examples include *Liezi*

¹⁰⁹ For the full score of the cantata, see *The Everlasting Sorrow*. The approach to modulation can be described in Chinese terms as 'turning the *fa* [of the current mode] into the *doh* [of the new mode]', or 'yi bian wei gong'.

¹¹⁰ Another instance in which Huang created a melody based on developing an existing tune is his work 'Maudgalyayana Rescues his Mother' ('Mulian jiumu', 1930).

¹¹¹ Wei's musical pieces brought from China were later compiled by his descendant Wei Hao (d. 1774) in a music handbook. At the beginning of the 20th c., 'Pure Peace', notated in the handbook, was transcribed by Suzuki Yonejiro (1868–1940). According to Qian, the notational versions of 'Pure Peace' that were published in China at the turn of the 20th c. were most likely based on Suzuki's notation. See Qian, 'An Ancient Song "Song of Pure Peace"', in *A Source Study of School Songs*, 43–6.

¹¹² For a translation and analysis of Huang's 'Song of Familial Bliss', showing how techniques used to fit the melody to text intonation are blended with a Western melodic style, see Cheung, 'Singing Ancient Piety and Modernity', 24–40.

Riding on the Wind (*Liezi yufeng*), *Song of Cool Emptiness* (*Lingxu yin*), and *Travelling to the Palace of Wide Coolness* (*Guanghan you*).¹¹³ These *qin* pieces, using the instrument's subtle timbres and a variety of characteristic melodic and rhythmic movements, favourably depict the state of Daoist transcendence from a variety of perspectives, ranging from meditative beholding to flying. The overtones of lost love in Huang's 'Immortals' Mountains' are rarely found in these pieces. What these *qin* pieces feature are mostly the immortals' fulfilled state of carefree existence and action, depicting their pleasure of transcendence even in places where coldness and solitude prevail.

While the sentiment of lost love lingers, the aesthetic of transcendence in 'Immortals' Mountains' is prominent. Indeed, to identify the Daoist sublime in the modern expressive context, one needs to hear it in the sonic environment of the nation building of the early twentieth century. Contrasting the dominating sounds of manly vigour and monumental grandeur, whether coming from the final movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony, Shen's 'Yellow River', or Huang's patriotic songs (e.g. 'The Hoisted National Flag' ['*Qi zheng piaopiao*'] and 'Fighting the Enemy' ['*Kangdi ge*']), the aesthetic of blandness and invocation of emptiness in 'Immortals' Mountains' celebrates an antithetical kind of sublime. The notion of the Daoist sublime here serves better than the beautiful in the Kantian discourse, as the latter's harmonic effect does not entail transcendence beyond the ordinary, staying committed to the charm that a pleasant object brings to one's experience.

It remains unclear how Huang would have described his evocation of the Daoist sublime in this piece. He would most likely have chosen not to use *gaohun*, as he did when referring to the second movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony, since 'Immortals' Mountains' was not imitative of Mozart's piece. Huang's student Qian characterized the melodic style of 'Immortals' Mountains' as having a refined aesthetics of 'antiquity' ('*gu*'), 'innocence' ('*chun*') and 'simplicity' ('*pu*').¹¹⁴ Combining Qian's description with my explication of *hun*, we could perhaps translate Huang's Daoist sublime back to Chinese with terms such as *guhun* (antique whole), *chunhun* (innocent whole) and *puhun* (simplicity whole). Aesthetics associated with such classical Daoist poetics can be found in other songs by Huang, especially those that have classical poems as texts, such as 'Busuanzi' and 'Flowers not Flowers' ('*Huafeihua*').¹¹⁵ While these songs are stylistically diverse in their musical design, the Daoist sublime that this article has identified can be applied to enable a productive understanding of their aesthetic appeal. Certainly, presenting the Daoist sublime as different from the Kantian sublime and beautiful does not deny the possibility of creative integration. But this topic lies beyond the scope of this article.¹¹⁶

THE MUSICAL SUBLIME AND MODERNITY

The musical sublime was never a mere elusive ideal in Chinese modernity. Its powerful sounds appealed to reformers for they could invigorate the mind and body of the

¹¹³ R. H. van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute: An Essay in the Ideology of the Ch'in* (Tokyo and Rutland, Vt., 1969 [1940]), 89–93. Titles of the pieces are translated by van Gulik. Notations of the repertory are found in early Ming-dynasty *qin* handbooks.

¹¹⁴ Qian, 'The Life, Thought, and Composition of Huang Zi', 252.

¹¹⁵ 'Flowers not Flowers' is also melodically developed from 'Pure Peace', but in ways different from 'Immortals' Mountains'. In terms of musical style, the two pieces are similar.

¹¹⁶ The notions of the beautiful in classical Chinese aesthetics span a wide spectrum that includes subtle differences. This would be an interesting topic to explore and would potentially expand my current analysis of 'Immortals' Mountains'.

modern nation's citizens. Reformers felt the vigour themselves through listening to march-style modern Chinese songs or grand symphonies in Western classical music, both of which were available or accessible only around the turn of the twentieth century. Compared with this new experience, existing Chinese musical sounds were to reformers' ears unsatisfactorily powerless. Such aesthetic judgement emerged from a convergence of factors. On the one hand, Western colonial superiority in warfare machinery had persuaded reformers to see a parallel achievement in Western musical technology; on the other, Confucian musical rituals auspiciously directed by benevolent authorities as ancient ideal practices had long been defunct in reformers' lives. But the unprecedented aesthetic change of their time was possible only when conceptual resources grasping and appreciating new sonic experiences had begun to circulate. More importantly, those newly emerged conceptual resources had to offer valid perspectives to address reformers' deep socio-cultural concerns. The conceptual roots of the sublime, as a powerful Chinese aesthetic experience and an ideal in reformers' advocacy of music, were traceable to the translated discourse of modern thinkers derived from Kantian philosophy. The musical sublime as a modern Chinese aesthetic thus relied on invoking translated Kantian notions, which in their Chinese linguistic forms stressed the properties of manly vigour and monumental grandeur. Reformers regarded the sonic expressions of such virile properties highly, since such sounds potently nurtured listeners to transcend their egoistic selves, giving them courage to commit to the collective and challenging cause of nation building. The Kantian sublime thereby was taken to realize the persisting Confucian ideology that saw moral cultivation through music as having an enormous impact on the destiny of the state. Vigorous, sublime music was an exemplar of 'lofty music' at the heart of reformers' music advocacy, as its aesthetic vigour could empower the nation to act upon security emergencies and cultural crises.

Following Kantian discourse, reformers not only recognized the musically beautiful but also liked to contrast it with the sublime in order to generalize the expressive capacity of music. Beyond the beautiful-sublime binary identification, however, a distinct aesthetic that featured classical Chinese poetics and its underlying Daoist transcendence ideals quietly prevailed. While the subtle sounds of the pre-modern literati's *qin* that musically epitomized those Daoist ideals in classical expressive culture were abandoned by reformers, classical aesthetics rooted in Daoism continued to offer inspiration, mainly through literary works, especially classical poetry. But such an aesthetic identification was rarely a discursive subject in reformers' advocacy of music, which was too occupied with introducing and legitimizing the validity of Western music with orthodox Confucian musical value. Yet, a few articulate remarks made by Huang prompt us to trace prevailing *senses* that continued to reference classical poetics and Daoist transcendence ideals, underlying aesthetic values that were seemingly antithetical to the dominant mode of manly vigour and monumental grandeur. Huang's association of Su's wind-riding journey in an eleventh-century *ci* poem with the second movement of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony—a creative act of listening across cultures and media—subtly reveals the vitality of such classical aesthetics. His use of the literary term 'gaohun' allows us critically to theorize the classical aesthetics as the Daoist sublime.

It is possible to question the socio-political relevance of the Daoist sublime given the predominance of the vigorous music ideal.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the two kinds of sublime were

¹¹⁷ My thanks are due to Angela Ki-che Leung for directing my attention to the socio-political relevance of the Daoist sublime.

antithetical in many ways: one persuades action to assert social change, the other eschews coercive force to be in oneness with the cosmic whole; one celebrates virile drives that create greatness in sound and vision, the other values emotional aloofness that underlies sonic blandness and impression of purity. Yet, however incompatible the two sublime styles sounded, they were both modern inventions founded upon a committed identification with the nation, and expressed through adopted Western musical forms and techniques. The Kantian sublime carried a martial style that commonly characterized patriotic songs and war songs of the time—a style that would soon be further developed by Communist musicians, whose extensive accommodation of the folksong melodies of the country would become the official style of Communist revolutionary music. Certainly, the lives of immortals in Daoist legends did not offer practical guidance to the lifestyle of socially committed modern citizens. But being exemplary of classical Chinese poetics, the Daoist sublime was implicitly endorsed as an admirable aesthetic of lofty music, one that could exhibit stylistically the elegant dimension of a strong Chinese national character. At a time of iconoclasm, in which ancient Confucian musical sounds unfortunately brought up feelings of colonial shamefulness, modern musical sounds invoking the Daoist sublime enabled a confident aesthetic connection between the nation's present and its past. Familiar poetic feelings acquired from reformers' childhood studies of classical literature conjured up refined sentiments and cultural longings, through which a sense of national pride and historical continuity were redeemed. Also, while having an allegorical capacity to engage with socio-political crises, the Daoist sublime inspired bland but dynamic sounds that balanced aesthetically the vehement strain of the Kantian sublime, offering distant space and emotional detachment for more profound insights to emerge. The lingering sense of loss and loneliness that was integral to the modern Daoist aesthetic can be heard as subtly voicing reformers' personal fears in crises-ridden modernity.

ABSTRACT

The sublime was at the aesthetic core of Chinese musical modernity from the first half of the twentieth century onwards. Not only was it an important subject for modern thinkers who introduced key ideas from Western philosophy, but the concept of the sublime was also translated into various Chinese terms. Notions of the Kantian beautiful and sublime were central to an ongoing discourse, but the Kantian sublime was never formally addressed with respect to music. What do survive are aesthetic remarks by critics eulogizing music in terms of its manly vigour and monumental grandeur, and it is these that prompt investigation into the philosophical context for the vigorous sound ideal promoted by reformers. The composer Huang Zi (1904–38) is a central figure since he not only referred to the final movement of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony in terms corresponding to the Kantian sublime, but also characterized the second movement using language drawn from classical Chinese poetics that invoked the immortals' wind-riding aspiration. His attribution of 'hun' echoed Daoist transcendence as found in classical lyric criticism and provides a starting point for theorization of the Daoist sublime as a component of modern Chinese aesthetics that continue classical poetics. Huang's works embrace a sense of loss that places them apart from Chinese modernists' emphasis on strength and virility in accordance with Western theories of the sublime.